

side rails.

### **REMARKS**

The Examiner is thanked for the clarity and conciseness of the Office Action, including the provisional allowance of certain claims, providing they were rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, new claims 23-27 inclusive, have been added, respectively representing the subject matter of claims 8, 9, 17, 18, and 20, rewritten in independent form, including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Thus, it is believed that newly submitted independent claims 23 and 25, and dependent claims 24, 26, and 27, made dependent thereon are allowable.

Claim 4 has been amended, to address the objection to the lack of antecedent basis for "said rib" therein. The objection to claim 6 is not understood. Claim 6 does not include the terminology "said female connector head". Claim 7 does include such a reference, but the antecedent "a female connector head" is included in claim 7.

Claim 10 has been amended for clarity. Claim 14 has been canceled. Claim 15 has been amended to be dependent upon claim 1, in view of the cancellation of claim 14.

Claims 1-5, 10-13 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), as being anticipated by Hilton, U.S. Patent No. 3,377,931. Hilton discloses detachable interlocking planks 12, 12a, assembled to form an aircraft landing mat 10. The planks include a plurality of rectangular cells 22, intermediate deck and base surfaces 24 and 26 (see, Figure 3). Reinforcing ribs 31 extend between deck and base surfaces 24 and 26, forming one or both of the elongated sides of the cells, depending upon the cell's lateral or intermediate location within the plank. It is essential for the

intended field of application, that Hilton's planks have both deck and base surfaces with reinforcement ribs extending therebetween, in which the ribs are oriented parallel to the normal direction of vehicular movement thereon. It is the combination of the plank surfaces and the ribs which provides the smooth running surface and the strength necessary to support high impact loading caused by the landing of large aircraft on the landing mat.

Applicant's claimed walk ramp has exposed ribs extending from the upper and lower sides of a plate. The ribs, in combination with the plate, define upper side and lower side tread channels. None of this claimed structure is disclosed or suggested by the Hilton reference. To the contrary, Hilton discloses essentially sealed planks, having a smooth and continuous exposed upper (and lower) surface, and enclosed ribs and cells (see, e.g. column 2, lines 31-37, and column 3, lines 16-23). Accordingly, it is believed that the anticipatory rejection of claims 1-5, 10-13 and 15, based upon the Hilton reference, can properly be withdrawn.

It is also respectfully submitted, that there would be no reason or inclination, for one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify or adapt the basic structure of Hilton, to more closely resemble Applicant's claimed tread plate. A skilled artisan would have no reason to remove the deck surface, for example, to provide exposed ribs. It would not be desirable to have exposed ribs for an aircraft landing mat, as the structural integrity would be compromised. Moreover, the uneven surface provided by the exposed ribs, would cause unnecessary wear and tear on the aircraft tires and landing suspension.

Claims 1, 2, 5, 10-14 and 16-22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art in view of the teachings of U.S. Patent No. 5,647,184, issued to Davis. Davis discloses a modular decking plank having a top wall 21 spaced-apart from a bottom

wall 22, and opposing laterally spaced side walls 23 and 24 interconnecting the top and bottom walls. Integral reinforcing ribs 25-29 are located between the side walls. The top surface of top wall 21 includes a number of alternately-spaced serrations 31 and risers 32, extending along the entire length of the decking plank 20.

The Examiner has characterized the top surface of top wall 21 as including a “plurality of ribs”, despite the fact that the ‘184 Patent terms such elements “risers” extending a mere 0.062 inches above the top surface. The Examiner has characterized the structures extending between the top and bottom walls as “integrally formed reinforcement means”, while the ‘184 Patent identifies structures 25-29 as “integral reinforcing ribs.” Putting semantics aside, Applicant does not believe that the structure taught in the Davis reference renders the above-identified claims as obvious.

Applicant has amended claims 1 and 16 to recite that the plurality of ribs protrude both from the upper side and from the lower side of the plate. It is also recited that these ribs are exposed, and are arranged in spaced relation to define upper side and lower side tread channels between them. Applicant respectfully traverses the contention that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have provided the Davis structure, with ribs extending from both sides of either the top wall or the bottom wall.

Fundamentally, Davis’ plank has a top wall and a bottom wall, arranged and maintained in spaced relation by means of vertical ribs and angled side walls. Even if one were to assume that Davis’ risers could properly be characterized as ribs, there would be absolutely no reason to put such a “rough texture” and a “slip-resistant decking surface” (see, column 4, lines 59-63) on the underside of the upper wall or on either side of the lower wall. In summary, it would not

occur to one of ordinary skill in the art to add Davis' risers to the underside of the upper wall, as it would simply add a rough texture to a surface which is neither seen nor encountered by the user. Similar reasoning applies to the lower wall, where adding such surface texturing would simply result in a more expensive construction and a non-functional feature.

The Esposito reference was relied upon in combination with Davis, to form rejections of claims 2 and 3. Esposito discloses a panel construction to form a roof or wall, not a structure to walk upon. Applicant believes that Esposito is non-analogous art, and that no showing has been made why one of ordinary skill in the art would look to a patent reference in the field of panels used for assembling a structure, to modify the construction of a ramp used for walking. The fields of art are simply too far removed in application and function, to be considered related for the purposes of hypothetically combining patent references to form a proper obviousness rejection.

Similarly, the White reference was relied upon in combination with Davis, to form a rejection of claim 6. White teaches a wall system comprising a plurality of pile members. Pile drivers and associated wall systems are not related to ramps used for walking. There is no explanation or reasoning provided in the Office Action, setting forth why one of ordinary skill in the art would look to the field of pile driver apparatus, to find a construction for a female connector for use in a walking ramp. Again, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner has improperly relied upon hindsight reasoning in formulating the rejection of claim 6.

In summary, reconsideration of the rejections of claims 1-22, based upon the prior art of record is requested. Applicant has complied with the outstanding objection to claim 4, and will comply further if the objection to claim 6 is explained. In view of the amendments made to the claims and the technical distinctions between Applicant's claimed invention and the cited art, it is

believed that the Examiner can, with propriety, allow claims 1-22, as well as claims 23-27.

Respectfully submitted,

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